



STATE OF CONNECTICUT NEWS RELEASE

Attorney General Richard Blumenthal
Department of Consumer Protection
Commissioner Edwin R. Rodriguez

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STATE ANNOUNCES AGREEMENT TO STOP TOBACCO SALES TO MINORS IN RITE AID STORES

Attorney General Richard Blumenthal and Department of Consumer Protection (DCP) Commissioner Edwin R. Rodriguez today announced that Rite Aid has agreed to implement major new policies to reduce the sale of tobacco products to minors in its stores in Connecticut and nationwide.

Blumenthal said the Rite Aid "Assurance of Voluntary Compliance" is the latest agreement produced by an ongoing, multi-state effort to enforce laws against retailers that have high rates of sales to minors and to adopt agreements to prevent sales to underage youth. Connecticut – as part of the multi-state effort – already has similar agreements with Walgreens and Wal-Mart stores and with all convenience stores operating under the Exxon, Mobil, ARCO and BP Amoco brand names.

"This agreement is a critical step toward zero tolerance of tobacco sales to minors," Blumenthal said. "Two thirds of people who begin smoking before they're 18 become addicted and one third die prematurely from a tobacco-related disease. This alarming rate calls for a fierce fight against youth tobacco addiction on every front – from the advertisements to the check out counters. My office, and the entire multi-state working group, will continue to vigorously enforce the agreements and aggressively urge more companies to agree to similar standards."

"This issue of minors being able to buy cigarettes in retail establishments is of great concern to the Department of Consumer Protection, since we have jurisdiction over stores' business conduct," Rodriguez said. "State law makes it very clear that selling cigarettes to someone under 18 is illegal in Connecticut."

The agreement requires Rite Aid to do the following:

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- Train employees on state and local laws and company policies regarding tobacco sales to minors, explaining the health-related reasons for such laws.
- Check the identification of any person purchasing tobacco products when the person appears to be under age 27, and only accept current and valid government-issued photo identification as proof of age.
- Use cash registers programmed to prompt identification checks on all tobacco sales.
- Hire an independent entity to conduct random compliance checks of over 10 percent of all Rite Aid stores in the participating states every six months.
- Prohibit self-service displays of tobacco products, the use of vending machines to sell tobacco products, the sale of cigarette look-alike products, and the distribution of free samples on store property.
- Prohibit the sale of smoking paraphernalia to minors.

Youth access to tobacco products ranks among the most serious public health problems. Studies show that more than 80 percent of adult smokers began smoking before the age of 18. Research indicates that every day in the United States, more than 2,000 people under the age of 18 begin smoking and that one-third of those persons will one day die from a tobacco-related disease. Young people are particularly susceptible to the hazards of tobacco, often showing signs of addiction after smoking only a few cigarettes.

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